THE EXPANSION OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE

All the figures for the past two hundred and fifty years which have any claim to credibility indicate a phenomenal growth in the population of China—an increase, it may be noted, which is paralleled by that of the rest of the world, so that the Chinese probably now constitute only a slightly larger proportion of the total bulk of mankind than in 1650.

The Chinese have been not only multiplying but geographically expanding. We have seen how, in early historic times confined chiefly to the North China plain and the valley of the Wei, they gradually spread, amalgamating with and absorbing many of the other cultural and racial groups with whom they came in contact. For many centuries that expansion was largely but by no means exclusively southward. Particularly were there southward movements in the centuries when the North was in the hands of invaders—between the Han and the Sui, and during the Sung. Migration also brought the Chinese into the highlands of Shansi, Shensi, and Inner Mongolia, into the valleys of Kansu, into Szechwan, into Yunnan, into Manchuria (long only in inconsiderable numbers and in the southern districts), and, to a limited extent, into the oases of what is now Sinkiang. After all of this expansion, however, at the beginning of the Ch'ing dynasty, nearly three centuries ago, the Chinese were chiefly confined to China proper.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (and probably, although less markedly, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) the Chinese spread widely beyond these boundaries. This was due to several causes—the great multiplication of population under the beneficent rule of the strong

Ch'ing Emperors, the improved transportation facilities and the economic development of lands in the Pacific basin, and, latterly, political disorders in China. The Chinese have proved to be physically adaptable to many different climates. They have thrived in the cold of Manchuria and in the heat of tropical lands. To be sure, those who have moved into Manchuria have been from northern China, where the winters are frigid, and those who have gone to the tropics have been from the provinces on the south coast, so that in neither case has the change in climatic environment